

A
LETTER
TO
JOHN GIFFORD, Esq.
CONTAINING
STRICTURES
ON THE
TENDENCY OF HIS WRITINGS IN GENERAL,
AND OF
HIS LETTER TO
The Hon. Thos. ERSKINE
IN PARTICULAR.

CEDITE ROMANI SCRIPTORES, CEDITE GRAII.

PROPERT.

“*Prithee, Launcelot, who is this same blustering SQUIRE?—this rectifier of wrongs?—this hurler of thunderbolts?*”
“*In good faith, Master, no SQUIRE at all—but a times-server—a bookseller’s hack—a paragraph grinder to the newspapers.*”

L O N D O N :

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*THE Writer of the following
pages had not an opportunity of seeing Mr.
Gifford's Letter to Mr. Erskine, till some time
after its publication; and circumstances of a
private nature prevented him from answering
it immediately. His name is of little conse-
quence to the public, and none at all to Mr.
Gifford, from whose last Pamphlet he is able
to extract, " That the Strictures of JUNIUS
" were not the less founded, or the less true, be-
" cause the Author did not disclose his name."*

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To JOHN GIFFORD, Esq.

SIR,

THE harshness of rebuke and severity of crimination which you invariably employ against those who differ from you in political sentiments, entitle you to very little courtesy when your own become the subjects of enquiry.—You appear to be equally unwilling to allow to your adversaries, either purity of intention or rectitude of judgment; as if you imagined your condemnation was to stand in the place of all argument, and that from your decision there was to be no appeal. But I have received sufficient disgust in the perusal of your Letters to this mode of controversy, to prevent me from attempting to equal you in this particular, as I am persuaded it contributes considerably to weaken the cause it is intended to support.

Indeed, Sir, I cannot conceive for what reason you stoop to so mean and pitiful a method of reply. You possess very ample information upon your subject; you are furnished with a style easy and correct, perspicuous

and clear ; but the pleasure to be derived from these is destroyed by the too frequent recurrence of passages, evidently written under the impulse of passion ; which the sobriety of reason would have condemned, and the suggestions of prudence would have rejected.

Much as you affect to despise the talents and abilities of Mr. Erskine, you would have evinced more solid judgment in imitating that gentleman's manner of writing. To betray such an impatience of contradiction and keenness of irritability in political discussion, is a convincing proof that you were not deceived yourself by the fallacy of your statements ; and that you wished to amuse the minds of your readers by the ebullitions of your anger, in order to supply the deficiency of your arguments.

An elegant and forcible writer has aptly characterised the temper and spirit of your *party* ; and of no one of which it is composed better than yourself. " I may be permitted to remark," says Mr. Mackintosh, " that the conduct of our enemies has not resembled the usual triumph of those who have been victorious in the war of reason. Instead of the triumphant calmness that is ever inspired by conscious superiority, they have betrayed the bitterness of defeat, and the ferocity of resentment, which is peculiar to the black revenge of detected imposture." To insinuate, whilst you are evidently writing to screen the minister from the effects of public vengeance, that you are " *linked*

*to no party,*** is an imposition too glaring to pass without notice, and too false to escape censure. You, who have before ridiculed with very sophistical reasoning, the idea of "*a party man upon principle,*"† are now reduced to the necessity of shewing upon what principle you are *a party man.*

Indeed Sir, it very ill becomes a vindicator of the present administration, to dogmatise in so lofty a tone, and with such a thundering accent, whilst endeavouring to justify the most flagrant instances of a crooked and wayward policy. If the present be "*clearly the most just and necessary war, that this or any other country ever was engaged in,*" was it necessary to occupy one hundred and seventy pages, composed of the most virulent declamation of your own, and of extracts from the speeches of the former factions of France, and the writings of unhappy and misguided emigrants, to prove its justice and necessity?

But you appear to have another object in view besides a defence of the most disastrous and disgraceful war, that ever stained the pages of British annals.

* Letter, page, 109.—I learn from your last Letter, and from that addressed to the Earl of Lauderdale, that you are a member of the Association conducted under the auspices of the worthy Mr. Reeves. I know not what more is requisite to make you *a party man*, unless it be a seat in Parliament, or a pension out of it, the latter of which, from the complexion of your writings, it is probable you may already possess.

† Letter to Lord Lauderdale, pages 111 and 168.

'Tis not enough that it be supported with all the aid to be derived from delusion and deceit, but those who have opposed it are to be overwhelmed with odium, to be branded with infamy, and treated with scorn, for possessing the wisdom to foresee, and the wish to avert those calamities which have been its natural,—its inevitable result.

It admirably suits your purpose, and you have availed yourself of it to the fullest extent, to confound the wishes and designs of the English Reformers, with the wild and impracticable notions of French Revolutionists. After all your boasted discrimination, I am sure your claim to it, is of a very questionable nature, if you do not discover that the accusation of a similarity of views, has no foundation in fact.—It is the cuckoo cough of terrified alarmists, the unmeaning babble of the pedants of corruption, the vulgar bugbear by which folly and credulity only can be deceived.

You tell Mr. Erskine that you are little disposed to withhold your assent from any of his declarations respecting *himself* ;* mark then your consistency—throughout the whole of your letter you endeavour to convince the world that Mr. Erskine is infected with the contamination of republicanism, and that the tendency of his conduct, and the wish of his heart, are to overturn the British Constitution. His association with the Society of the Friends of the People, appears to

have exposed him particularly to your attacks, and furnish the basis of your accusation. What credit then is due to your assertion of not withholding your assent to Mr. Erskine's declarations respecting *himself*, when he asserts upon his honor, his reasons for joining that Society to have been exactly the reverse of those you have imputed to him.

Their principles, and his own likewise, are thus described by him. "Their avowed object," says he, "was, to bring the very cause which Mr. Pitt had so recently taken the lead in, fairly and respectfully before the House of Commons: in hopes, as they declared, to tranquillise the agitated part of the public, to restore affection and respect for the legislature, so necessary to secure submission to its authority; and, by concentrating the views of all reformers to the preservation of our invaluable Constitution, to prevent that fermentation of political opinion, which the French revolution had undoubtedly given rise to, from taking a Republican direction in Great Britain."*

Was not the object of this Association laudable in the highest degree? Was it not loudly called for by the exigency of the times? Was it not the most conciliatory method of appeasing the minds of the people? of "allaying the foaming ebullition of discontent?" and softening the asperities of Opposition, which they had evinced to the measures of the Government? Was

not true loyalty better displayed, and more sincerely shewn by such a conduct, than by associating with Mr. Reeves, for the purpose of supporting Administration in the prosecution of projects, which but for the terror thus artfully excited, and the delusion thus wickedly maintained, could never have been carried into execution?

Of the propriety of such a conduct, I intend to speak further in the sequel, and shall proceed to make a few observations upon some of the miscellaneous parts of your letter.

Your remarks upon the necessity of private virtue to qualify for public usefulness* are such as I have ever considered in the highest degree proper. They are rational and conclusive—But such is the defective situation of society, such is the general licentiousness which the haughtiness of aristocratic pride has contributed to produce, that in establishing this rule, excellent as it is, we should disqualify a much greater number of persons than perhaps you were aware of. If impartial Justice were to visit the offices of Government, according to the rule which you have laid down, who would abide the rigour of its scrutiny? It is not Mr. Fox alone who would be condemned to private life.—Notwithstanding the unqualified approbation you have bestowed upon Mr. Pitt,† I hope you are not so

* Page 5.

† Pages 109 and 110. Letter to Lord Lauderdale.

blind as to imagine even he would retain his office ; and I hope for the honor of our Constitution you do not mean to extend it much further. For I firmly believe, the same sentiments from the pen of a Parliamentary Reformer, would subject him to a prosecution. I was the language that was used by Mr. Paine before you ; I confess from different motives, but still the principle was the same. It is a language which the supporters of the present Administration cannot hold, without being lost to every sense of honor, and incapable of every die of shame. *Verbum sat sapienti.*

God forbid, that the moment should ever arrive, in which Great Britain should look for its safety to the *sobriety* of Mr. Pitt, the *moderation* of Mr. Windham, or the *consistency* of Mr. Dundas. The flimsy support to be derived from their virtue in the hour of danger, would be equal to the *blessings* they have been the instruments of obtaining during the period of their prosperity.

I trust, Sir, I am as fully convinced as yourself, of the importance of religion, and of its influence upon the conduct of public men ; but I see no reason why a person qualified to be eminently useful in a very critical and dangerous moment, should not be employed ; although others with less influence, with less power, and less capacity, might in their private situations appear more amiable. The calamities we now suffer, and those we have reason to expect, loudly call for a speedy and effectual peace.

The nation now considers Mr. Fox as the only man capable of obtaining this desirable and indispensable object; and it therefore furnishes no occasion for surprise, that his adversaries should encrease their invective, and redouble their exertions against him. To his talents for this purpose Mr. Burke has already made the frigid confession, which necessity has extorted from an enemy: and his fame is to be rendered the more compleat by the addition of your suffrage. I think I am therefore warranted in saying, that the torrent of your abuse proceeds not from a love of virtue, or a solicitude for religion, but from the jealousy of rivalry, and the prospect of disgrace.

For so signal a benefit as the restoration of peace, the nation would bestow honor and confidence upon the individual who had procured it: and the errors and improprieties of his private life, would be entirely absorbed in the splendor of his public conduct.

The people awakened from the dream of error, have opened their eyes to the true source of their misery. They feel the weight of their calamities and they are about to demand a constitutional and speedy redress. They know that without such a redress, the prosperity of Great Britain is gone for ever, that their constitution is annihilated, and their vassalage insured. The profligate squanderers of national treasure, the unfeeling promoters of extensive destruction, will be dismissed to contemplate their disgrace and infamy, covered with the indignation and reproach which they deserve.

What consolation they may derive from the reflection of having endeavoured to preserve Christianity, by means, to practice which even a heathen would have blushed, will not be envied them by their bitterest enemies.

Whilst our Administration have been openly violating the plainest doctrines of religion, they have pretended to be fighting in its support. Whilst they have torn asunder the ties of civil society, they have contended that they endeavoured to preserve them.

The delicacy of polished life, the sweetness of social intercourse have been sacrificed to their ambition.

The hemisphere of distant regions still sound with the knell of human happiness, and the miseries of thousands wait for a tardy and inadequate retaliation.*

Such reflections are no doubt too homely and too vulgar for the elevation of your ideas. Wholly occupied with hatred against those whom you have represented as atheists, you are endeavouring to prolong the iniquity of a conduct, for which nothing but atheism or insanity can furnish an excuse.

* My pacific principles would not approve any other mode of retaliation, than that they should be permitted to retire to privacy and oblivion; accompanied w^tth the pangs of remorse, and the execrations of the World.

Passing from Mr. Fox to the Question of the War, you treat the subject as heretofore, without that great requisite of political discussion, a calm and sober temper. It is altogether needless for me to follow the same beaten track upon which you have already met so many able and distinguished combatants; and since the Pamphlet of Mr. Erskine, I am sure it would be absurd. The grand features of the debate are there traced with so masterly a hand, and placed in so lucid a point of view, with "a strength of argument" "that seems to beat down all resistance, and to set "confutation at defiance." Of the last you appear to have been sensible from the method of reply which you have chosen, a method too weak to convince, and too confused to inform. Constantly boasting of the abundance of your proof, but producing only quotations of an authority equal to your own. Bewildered in a labyrinth of clumsy accusations, composed of indefinite charges, characteristic of your liberality and candour; you have disgusted the sensible by the incongruity of your ideas, and the cool by the coarseness of your slander. Mr. Erskine, who, is in one page accused of revolutionary ideas, in another is derided for giving advice, resulting from a tender solicitude for the preservation of the British Constitution.

It would require a much greater portion of time than I am willing to spare, to point out the multiplied contradictions, into which you have been hurried by the petulance of your zeal. I am not willing to subject myself to a drudgery so destitute of reward. Besides

as the ocean of absurdity already contains a Leviathan,* I see no reason why it should not be furnished with a less unwieldy being; and whilst Mr. Burke is exploring its deeps, you may surely be permitted to flounce upon its sands.

Page 7.—you say “ As I do not stand forward “ the encomiast of Mr. Pitt, but as the champion “ of truth,” &c. This passage tends to throw some light upon a former one in your Letter to Lord Lauderdale,† which exhibits all the fulsome ness of encomium, laid on with such an unsparing hand as must disgust even vanity itself. You are not the encomiast of Mr. Pitt, though you certainly endeavour to be so. In elevating him for virtues which he does not possess, you pronounce the severest condemnation upon his defects.

By you the Subject has been considered in a manner truly personal. The important considerations of national security, the return of those blessings of which the war has deprived us, is denied to be an object worthy of our regard. Public benefit is to be sacrificed at the shrine of private ambition; and the British nation once renowned for the mildness of its laws, and the extension of its commerce, is to be reduced to insignificance and beggary; the devoted victim of ministerial rapacity.

* Oceanus belluosus. HORAT.

† See page 109 of that Letter.

Finding the nation impoverished and distressed, which the slightest view of society in England will instantly display, you seem to have hit upon a notable method of making the people as despicable as you desire. 'Tis not enough that they have been oppressed, they must also be insulted; and the subjugation of the whole, is to be obtained by the destruction of a part. To obtain this, they are represented as reptiles, whom it is becoming and proper for the ponderous foot of authority to crush. So benevolent are your sentiments, you neglect no opportunity of heaping upon this unfortunate class, all the invective which acrimony can bestow. To rail with such unfeeling bitterness against vice, is not the most unequivocal proof of virtue. Against that species of vice, the origin of which may be traced to the corruption of Governments, to the apathy of Priests, and the numbing influence of ignorance. It is a fit employment for the myrmidons of oppression to vilify those whom they have rendered vile; and whilst they reason from their knowledge of themselves, it is no wonder they should boldly proclaim the extinction of human virtue.

That the poor, being mostly ignorant, are but indifferent politicians must be allowed; and reasoning chiefly whilst under the pressure of immediate distress, on subjects of legislation, it is not likely they should always form the most accurate notions of redress. But they are very far from deserving that insolent contempt with which they have been treated by those who are

dependant upon them for support. When the themint of Beaconsfield stiled them the *Swinish Multitude*, he forfeited every claim to the discrimination of a Philosopher, and the benevolence of a Christian. The explanation you have given* is entitled to as much attention as the sentiment is to respect. When I came to page 155 of your pamphlet, I expected to have found from the exordium with which it was introduced, a proof of that disaffection which you have stated to exist. As a nameless handbill it is entitled to little attention, had you not brought it forward as one of your undeniable proofs. It is just such a *proof* as you have produced on other occasions, which, instead of proving your assertions, only expose your spirit of misrepresentation. It is stated by you as having a tendency to "the production of discontent and the fuscitation of revolt."

But how is this shown by the paper itself, which appears to me (pardon my blindness) not to partake in the smallest degree of insurrection against the constitution of this country. The terrible words which you have printed in Italics, as comprising the spirit and meaning of the whole, are, *Peace and Reform*, not *Bloodshed and Rebellion*. To persist thus obstinately in confounding principles so essentially dif-

* Letter to Lord Lauderdale, pages, 127 and 128 to 200.

† It is true that the Resolutions close with the words, *Murder, Oppression, and Death*, but they are mentioned as being the favourite system of the present administration; with what justice or propriety every one is at liberty to judge.

ferent, so diametrically different, so diametrically opposite, betrays a malignity of disposition, and a blackness of intention, which the splendor of your talents cannot conceal, and the nature of your cause cannot defend.

The treason of the harangue is contained in speaking irreverently of that *matchless model of temperate virtue*, Mr. Windham ; and disrespectfully, though truly, of the object of your idolatry Mr. Pitt.—So then, to doubt the purity of these gentlemen, is according to your admirable logic, converted into an act of disaffection to the State ; and calls for *the aid of “strong restrictive laws to keep the factious Societies in “ AWE” that they may learn not to question the perfection of a Prime Minister, nor dare to doubt the rectitude of a pensioned apostate.* I grant that it is the language of discontent, but not of discontent without a cause ; and as it holds out the prospect of reform, it tends to allay but not to encrease it.

Though it is your delight indiscriminately to condemn, it is not my intention wholly to defend all the principles which that paper contains. But I am sure it would much better become such gentlemen as yourself, who pretend to superior knowledge in the science of Government, to condescend to instruct the lower orders in the knowledge of their just rights ;*

* It has been frequently asserted with more confidence than truth, that the poor should be debarred from all po-

rather than by forming yourselves into an inquisitorial cabal, to raise by clamour a jealousy which you may hereafter be unable to dispel, and provoke by insolence a resistance, which the sagacity of *spies* and *informers* may be incompetent to combat.

political knowledge, that the labouring man has no time for the discussion of such subjects, and that the mechanic is not interested in the affairs of State.—But let such sapient philosophers (amongst whom you may perhaps be one) inform us what reason can be assigned for such a deprivation. It is to them we must look for support in a contest, it is their blood that must flow, it is to the arm of popular strength we owe our defence.

Some of the higher classes have not acquired much applause by their interference. It has been the common plea of idleness and ignorance, that as the state was in danger, loyalty required them to enrol in a troop of yeomanry Cavalry, a total neglect of their affairs, and settled habits of vice have been the result. Whilst I give the following weekly journal of a loyal red coated clown, which I affirm to be a fact, I wish it to be considered rather as a warning to others, than an insinuation that such habits are universal amongst the association. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays are *field days*: on these days he repairs to the nearest market town, joins the troop, performs his exercise, and then adjourns to dinner—here intemperance is the order of the day, and he can rarely persuade himself to return home till midnight. The three days following are evaporated in the sluggishness of returning reason, in which labour is forgotten, or if recollect, despised. The Sabbath is the only day of attention to his farm.

Trusting in some degree to your insinuation that you are perfectly master of the science of legislation, I submit the following questions for your solution, as a slight employment for a vacant half hour, if indeed a bookseller's historian can be supposed to possess it. You will observe they are evidently drawn from this paper of political heresy, this *treasonable recommendation of peace and reform.*

1st. Is not the late militia augmentation bill calculated, by increasing the powers of ministers, underving of public confidence, to destroy the British Constitution, and the liberty of the people?

2d. When Ministers of the Crown have power given them by Parliament, to drag the subjects from their nearest and dearest connections, and force them to become men of blood, are not their lives, persons and property, at the disposal of those Ministers?

3d. Is it not natural that the poorer class of the people should complain, when this disposal is given to ministers by a Parliament, the majority of which is wholly unconnected with their interest? By men who are placed there by the will of the minister whom they serve, and often in defiance of the people for whom they pretend to legislate?

4th. Is not this corruption the *primary* cause of the unparalleled powers of the present Ministers, and does it not destroy that protection which the constitution originally afforded?

5th. Was not the House of Commons intended by the spirit and letter of the constitution, to have been a fair and equal representation of the community? On what ground then are many Englishmen now called to support burthens which they have no representatives to impose, and what interest can they be thought to have in a constitution in which they have no voice?

6th. Has not any Englishman a right to endeavour, by every legal and constitutional measure, to restore Parliament to a state of purity, even if his opinion happen to coincide with that system which the Duke of Richmond, if not the first to propose, was the most active to procure—of annual Parliaments, and universal suffrage?

7th. Since representation has been allowed by the best political writers to be not only the least exceptionable, but the most perfect mode of Government, what excuse can sophistry furnish for those calumniators who stigmatize the men that have endeavoured to give it every improvement of which it is susceptible, as daring innovators and lawless incendiaries, guided by no principle, and governed by no foresight, as wretches whom honor cannot bind, whom order cannot regulate, and whom wisdom cannot controul?

8th. Who then are the true friends of their country? Who are the real supporters of its government, and the promoters of its happiness?—Those who wish for the

continuance of abuses and the prolongation of expence ; or those who would give solidity to its power, by making it respectable, and secure the edifice of the constitution, by widening the base upon which it rests ?

The Society of the Friends of the People, whose principles you are either too ignorant to understand, or too malevolent to explain, was sensible of the danger to be apprehended from the continuation of those abuses, which had contributed more than any thing else, " to " the fuscitation of discontent"—It was composed of men of discernment ; they followed the dictates of discretion and prudence—At the same time that they held out to the people, the hope of a constitutional redress, (which all your sophistry can never prove to be rebellion) they also checked in the bud, all discussion beyond that specific object ; which object they stated to be neither more nor less than a reform of the British House of Commons.—The Society for Constitutional Information, wrote to the Society of the Friends of the People. Their letter contained sentiments of a nature too speculative for the approbation of the Society of the Friends of the People, and their answer to them is the fullest refutation of your unfounded calumny.

" We profess," say they, " not to entertain a wish, that the great plans of public benefit, which Mr. Paine has so powerfully recommended, will speedily be carried into effect ; nor to amuse our fellow-citizens

with the magnificent promise of obtaining for them the ‘rights* of the people in their full extent,’ the indefinite language of delusion, which, by opening unbounded prospects of political adventure, tends to destroy that public opinion, which is the support of all free governments, and to excite a spirit of innovation, of which no wisdom can foresee the effect, and no skill direct the course. *We view man as he is: the creature of habit, as well as of reason.* We think it therefore our bounden duty to propose no extreme changes, which, however specious in theory, can never be accomplished without violence to the settled opinions of mankind, nor attempted without endangering some of the most estimable advantages which we confessedly enjoy. We are convinced that the people bear a fixed attachment to the happy form of our government, and the genuine principles of our constitution. These we cherish as objects of just affection, not from any implicit reverence or habitual superstition, but as institutions best calculated to produce the happiness of man in civil society;—and it is because we are convinced that abuses are undermining and corrupting them, that we have associated for the preservation of those principles. We wish to reform the constitution, because we wish to preserve it.”

* The words of the Letter from the Society of Constitutional Information.

Is it possible for a man of common sense to mistake the meaning of such a declaration? Is it possible for a man of common honesty to represent it as treasonable or seditious? Both these Sir, you have done, without being able to produce a single proof that the Society ever entertained different sentiments.

You see by the above quotation (and many more might be brought of the same tendency) that this society operated as a salutary check upon others, and that they constantly reprobated "all extreme changes" however specious in theory, not connected with this ostensible object. These were the means they employed to prevent the spirit of enquiry which had gone forth from "taking a Republican direction in Great Britain." You were aware that without misrepresentation, these principles could never be rendered odious; that misrepresentation you have employed with many others, by all the methods of deceit which could be supplied by art, or suggested by falsehood. With the most consummate effrontery, you have complained of the calumny of others; but where, Sir, can you find an instance equal to your own?

It is difficult to tell for what purpose you have copied a part of a silly play, which after all appears only to have been the production of a person busily employed like yourself in making waste paper, and which had no connection with the Government of

France or of England, or with the illustrious persons mentioned in the list of *Dramatis Personæ*. What proof have you, that that piece contained the sentiments of the people of France relative to the Opposition in England? Are the effusions of a paltry playwright the organ of popular opinion? You have contradicted yourself, by saying that you "shall not be suspected of imputing to the gentlemen whose names are there introduced, the sentiments which the author has been pleased to ascribe to them." But let me say, that I not only suspect you, but charge you with having done it. You have branded them in substance with the odious title of revolutionists; you have stiled them the "friends of the mob;" you have said that their conduct is "precisely such as men under the direct influence of the Executive Directory of France would be taught to pursue;" and you have been as unsparing in your invective, as you have been unjust in its application.

But time will withdraw the veil which ministerial artifice has woven; and experience with an iron hand, will break the setters of delusion. The friends of reform, who alone are the true friends of the people and of their rulers, will be found to have been the best friends of orderly government. The fawning flatterers that surround the court, have arrogated to them-

* Page 79. Note.

† Page 40. Note.

‡ Page 168.

selves the exclusive merit of affection for their monarch. But we have not yet forgotten, that it was by the advice of "the King's friends" as they falsely styled themselves, that his Majesty lost his American dominions, and having contracted the extent of his empire, they have succeeded by the same wicked policy, in destroying the happiness and liberty of his subjects.

The logic of destruction is worthy of its object, consistent with its designs, and characteristic of its supporters. To enter into an eternal and exterminating war for the security of our property, the preservation of our religion, and the protection of our persons, was to act in a manner which the absence of reason only could justify. A little reflection might have convinced us, that property is endangered by the expence of contention, that religion would be odious, if it must be supported by murder, and that hostility is ill calculated to prolong the blessing of existence.

If the situation of those who have been only spectators of the war at home, has a claim upon our compassion, what is due to the sufferings of others? Of those who have fallen victims to the march of pestilence, as if carnage of itself was not sufficiently destructive,—of those who have been frozen by the congelation of the elements, or melted by the calenture of unhealthy climates? To meet death in the field of battle, is a blessing which many a soldier is denied; he is commonly reserved for a more terrible fate. He must suffer the aggravated tortures of lingering

pain, and resist whilst he can, the suffocation of an hospital, before he is "heaved in pits, or whelmed into the ocean, without notice and without remembrance!"

When we consider how trifling an interest, those who are exposed to danger have in the successful termination of the contest, we are lost in wonder at the infatuation of mankind.* It likewise serves to increase our indignation against the wretches, who, *in dastardly security at their desks*, are fabricating fresh pretexts, for the wider extension of horrors which they do not feel, and of crimes which they do not regret: who contend that a breach of politeness is a just cause for desolation, and a difference of OPINION a rational argument for the sacrifice of thousands.

The present war, originating in motives as base and abominable as its progress has been calamitous and unsuccessful, is incapable of defence, whether we seek for it amongst the high flown metaphors of

* "A poor fellow in Marshall Saxe's army was going to be hanged for stealing a crown. Saxe asked him, how he could risk his life for such a triffe? As to that, said the brave culprit, I have long exposed it every day for two pence halfpenny. This speech recalled to Saxe's memory, his bravery and wretched situation to forcibly, that he gave him his pardon."

Lady Wallace's Letter to her Son. Page 117.

Burke, the snivelling absurdities of Jerningham,* or the twisting labyrinths of Giffordian argument. They talk much of its justice and necessity, I wonder they have not expatiated on its splendor and success. But if it had possessed the latter recommendations, it would not on that account have been less flagitious or less reprehensible. Where so few advantages have been gained, it was natural to suppose we should make the most of them ; but the benevolent and the wise have wept when they considered to what they lead, and reflected upon what they cost. Popular enthusiasm may for a moment silence the suggestions of humanity :

“ Yet reason frowns on war’s unequal game,
“ Where wasted nations raise a single name,
“ And mortgaged states their gransires wreaths regret,
“ From age to age in everlasting debt ;
“ Wreaths which at last the dear bought right convey,
“ To rust on medals, or on stones decay.”

JOHNSON.

These lines are so truly beautiful and so applicable to the present posture of affairs, that they ought to be engraved in letters of gold.

* It is singular that Mr. Jerningham has already felt the lash of criticism from a very ingenious person of the name of Gifford, in an elegant satire called the Baviad. I would recommend Mr. G. in the next edition of his poem, to take notice of Mr. Jerningham’s last contemptible performance, entitled “ Peace, Ignominy and Destruction,” he will

But of all the reasons we have had urged in support of the present war, that surely is the most insulting which states it as being necessary for the support of religion—as if the mild and benevolent system of Jesus Christ, was to be enforced by the thunder of the cannon, and lessons of divinity were only to be delivered under the shade of the blood stained pavilion. A part, though a very small part of the French nation, has imbibed the doctrine of atheism, but it is a doctrine too comfortless and too unfounded ever to gain ground in the present state of civil society; and its progress if it could make any, would certainly not be impeded by the miserable opposition of warlike fanatics, who, to convince an atheist of the existence of a God, would drive him unprepared into the presence of an offended Deity.

find in it many parts worthy of his attention and correction. Such for instance as the following, where the writer addresses himself to Britain, and says,

“ Yet proud to raise *a bubble of thy earth.*”

Mr. J. seems to have taken the hint given him in the Baviad, and to have ceased

————— to weep

“ O'er love lorn oxen, and deserted sheep.”

But I wish the author of that satire to decide how much better he has succeeded on more dignified subjects. His bookseller, alas! knows but too well!

I grant, Sir, that you have adduced many instances to shew that atheism has been more openly avowed by persons in power in France, than it has in England; but I contend that the people of France are not atheists.

It would have displayed much greater candor in you, who I suppose are ambitious of being considered as an historian of France, to have traced the causes which have produced this perversion of intellect; to have shown what was really the case, that the court of Louis XVI. was the hot-bed of infidelity; and that the Clergy and Bishops by their immoral lives and dissolute habits, contributed to engender in the minds of the people, an utter disregard and hatred for religion. Many of the Clergy notwithstanding your encomium upon their piety, privately professed themselves to be atheists; and for some years before the revolution, it was considered as a proof of a shallow understanding, to have the least regard for the repositories of revelation. They were scorned by the learned, and derided by the witty; and it became evident from the conduct of the ecclesiastics, that many of them considered religion merely as a trick of State, by which they might "the easier impose upon a busy and unthinking world."*

Such is the origin of French atheism, and the pretensions of the British Minister to virtue, certainly

* You will say that this is assertion. I refer you for the proof to a small tract called "French atheism, and English christianity," by W. Richards.

entitle him to the exclusive right of attempting to extirpate it by the sword. It has not been the wayward offspring of the revolution, it was fostered with all the care of aristocratic nurture, it sprung up and flourished beneath the culture of regal oppression. Mr. Burke says, “atheism is a good ground of war,” but how a sentiment so abominably bad can be a *good ground* either for war or peace, I must leave to his sagacity to demonstrate.

Firmly persuaded of the excellency of christianity, and of the conviction by which it is supported in every thinking mind, I entertain no fears of its eradication in France. But I am not insensible that the sanguinary dispositions of pretended religionists, operate as a powerful obstacle against its compleat success. I am sure that the atheists and deists of France, will rather be confirmed in their principles than shaken by the conduct of this country, and will imbibe sentiments of abhorrence for the christian religion, whilst its pastors contend that the immolation of twenty millions of men, is necessary for its support.*

* I do not put an unfair construction upon Miss Hannah More's remarks upon Dupont's speech, when I contend that such was the argument they contained. As if a speech of the most abominable blasphemy, which Dupont's certainly was, could justify a war against the people of France, who condemned the sentiment with as much abhorrence as Miss More herself. When I consider the tendency of her publication, I blush for the author of *Sensibility, a poetical Epistle*.

Those who can recommend such a conduct, so contrary to humanity, and so subversive of religion, must be totally ignorant of that system which they profess to uphold. It stands upon its own foundation, it shines with the lustre of the Divinity, and despairs like its founder, to call in the aid of human interference. But the disciples of bigotry, ambition and folly, have contrived to pervert the simplicity and benignity of its principles; and have employed it as a grand machine by which they have rendered the history of mankind a recital of blood. Such persons very well deserve the appellation of *devilish good christians*, given them by Sir George Saville.*

To say that the war is urged in support of religion, is an assertion that not only deserves contempt, but demands abhorrence. To say that it is for the support of civil society, might pass for an Hibernian bull; but common sense in England, has discovered that the extermination of man, will not contribute in any rapid degree to cement the bond of social union.

In perfect consistency with your manner of treating the subject, you have condescended to notice one or two trifling inaccuracies (for they are nothing more) in Mr. Erskine's writing,† although it is very easy to justify them by contrasting your errors; I will not disgrace the champion of reform by the comparison.

* See Monthly Magazine, vol. 3. page 645.

† Pages 60, and 108.

However it may hurt your vanity, I protest that you are not worthy of entering the *arena*, after Burke and Erskine. What would you have said, if an answerer of the former, when replying to his Letter to a noble Lord, had selected the following passage as unusually inaccurate :

“ These obscene harpies, who deck themselves in I know not what divine attributes, but who in reality are foul and ravenous birds of prey (both mothers and daughters) flutter over our heads, and souse down upon our tables, and leave nothing *unrent, unrifled, unravaged, or unpolluted with the slime of their dirty effal.**” Page 21.

The meaning (if it has any) would disgrace the mouth of a Billingsgate wench, and the sentence shows, how easily sense may be sacrificed to sound.

But this does not invalidate Mr. Burke's arguments, neither does it injure his reputation as a writer.

* For the amusement of the critical reader, I subjoin Mr. Peltier's translation of this passage into French, which will confirm my remark.

“ Ces harpies obscénés, qui se masquent sous je ne sais quels attributs divins, mais qui ne sont, malgré leur deguisement, que de sales oiseaux de proie, (les meres ainsi que leur petits) après avoir agité leur ailes au dessus de nos têtes, fondent à l'improviste sur nos tables, *souillent, déchirent, pillent, et ravagent, CE QU'ELLES Y TROUVENT, ET NE QUITTENT RIEN SANS y laisser les traces impures de leur degouttant curée.*

He will long be acknowledged one of the first names in English literature, and will continue to charm, to animate, and to instruct,* when the effusions of your spleenetic brain will be deservedly buried in eternal oblivion.

If in the course of these Strictures I have not bowed to your judgment, with that implicit reverence, which the idea you have formed of your own merit inclined you to expect, it has been because from reasons of a personal nature, rather than the more noble motives of public patriotism, you have displayed in your writings, such a fixed determination to support the present destructive measures ; because you have treated your superiors in knowledge, and your equals in virtue, with a rudeness which no Jacobinical leveller could have exceeded ; and stamped your decisions with an air of haughtiness, intended to silence enquiry, and intimidate discussion ; and lastly, though not least in importance, BECAUSE YOU HAVE BASELY PERVERTED FACTS, FOR THE DISHONOURABLE PURPOSES OF CALUMNY AND MISREPRESENTATION.

* I confine this last to his former works.

FINIS.

